

LIBRARY

Brigham Young University

RARE BOOK COLLECTION

PR

4809

.H18

F6

1923

BRIGHAM, YOUNG UNIVERSITY



3 1197 22960 1809

+

16755

By LAURENCE HOUSMAN

LITTLE PLAYS OF ST. FRANCIS.

SAINT FRANCIS POVERELLO.
(Messages of the Saints.)

SELECTED POEMS.

THE WHEEL: a Dramatic Trilogy.

THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS: a Play.

PAINS AND PENALTIES: a Play.

THE CHINESE LANTERN: a Play.

With H. Granville-Barker

PRUNELLA, or Love in a Dutch
Garden: a Play.

Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., London

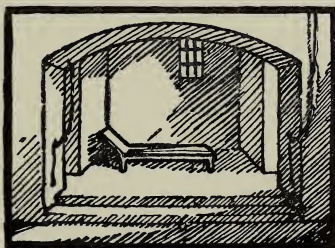
FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

FOLLOWERS of St. FRANCIS

Four Plays of the Early Franciscan

Legend, by

LAURENCE HOUSMAN



London

Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd.

1923

UPB

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	vii
CURE OF SOULS	1
LOVERS MEETING	19
THE FOOL'S ERRAND	33
THE LAST DISCIPLE	43

PREFACE

ONLY one of the four Franciscan plays which here follow has any close incidental connection with the life of St. Francis ; and that is the only one which might properly have a place found for it in the *Little Plays*. But while continuing to illustrate the Franciscan legend in dramatic form, I did not intend to make a constructive sequel, and would sooner have let the *Little Plays* stand without further addition, if this small overflow had not come quite spontaneously, and rather against my arranged plan, which gave the preceding Cycle a fairly definite starting-point and a still more definite end. To force these other plays into the series would be a dislocating process, since all but the first would have to follow 'Sister Death,' an obvious anti-climax, destructive to the main scheme.

I would therefore ask my readers to regard these additional plays rather as commentaries on what has gone before, brought to life by the fact that Franciscanism retained its dramatic character after its founder was dead. More especially is the scene representing the death of Brother Leo a commentary

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

rather than a self-contained play—so many of the dying man's words depending for their meaning on what has gone before. Those who have read the *Little Plays* will not, I hope, find the reminiscent passages uninteresting; those who have not may feel that a clue is missing to which they have some sort of a claim. This I have done my best to meet by adding an explanatory footnote, giving reference to previous events. In adopting the suggestion of M. Paul Sabatier, in his annotated edition of the *Speculum Perfectionis*, that 'Sister Giacomina' was the watcher and death-bed companion of this last and most faithful of the Poverello's disciples, I have rather strained my own chronology, since, in the *Little Plays*, the Lady Giacomina appears as a matronly figure at too early a stage of the story for her survival fifty years after the death of St. Francis to be possible. But as there is definite record that a lady bearing her name was still living at Assisi in the year 1273, it is more than probable that I dated her first meeting with Francis too early in his life and too late in hers; and it would be a sin against charity to deprive Brother Leo of his best possible comforter, merely to keep up the fiction of a chronological accuracy to which I do not pretend.

But if, for the reasons given, three of these scenes stand at a remove from the main scheme of what went before, 'Cure of Souls' could quite appropri-

PREFACE

ately be included among the *Little Plays*. In Part II., which is the record of the spiritual success of the Franciscan method as expressed in the founding of the Order, I have shown St. Francis having fortunate dealings with fools, brigands, murderers, thieves, misers, infidels, and kings; but I have not shown him in actual contact with the ecclesiastical power which claimed his allegiance. Yet it so happens that history, in a document discovered less than a generation ago, has supplied the material for such an encounter, and material of a very important kind. The account left by Jacques de Vitry of the granting by Pope Honorius III. of the Indulgence of the Portiuncula, has caused students of the Franciscan legend to pass a much more favourable judgment on the probabilities of the story than formerly. With the establishment of its truth it acquires a significance which cannot be gainsaid; and its apparent inconsistency with the known attitude of Francis toward the asking of any ecclesiastical privilege from Rome—and especially of one so shady in its subsequent developments as the formal granting of an indulgence—is a difficulty which has to be faced, and if possible explained.

In 'Cure of Souls' I have done this to the best of my ability; and I trust that the explanation I have offered is the true one. And here to make it more clear, I will quote what I have already written in

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

that connection, in my short study of the Saint's life, *St. Francis Poverello*, published in 1918.

‘Do we not see already, even in this brief account [by Jacques de Vitry] the working of the mind of St. Francis? The system of indulgences was a thing well established by Church rule; it stood on Papal authority. Francis, therefore, had no thought of questioning it; but he had an instinctive wish to clear it of abuse, give it a more spiritual interpretation, and relate it more understandably to the immeasurable love of God. And just as he saw himself, poor, mean, and inadequate, the chosen instrument of divine love, so did he desire that this small domestic chapel of his Brotherhood might have a like charge committed to it. Portiuncula was poor and mean and without prestige; it was easy of access, it contained no shrine, it had worked no miracles; and for those very reasons he required that the indulgence given to it should be in the fullest sense plenary—the declaration of an unmeasured release for penitent hearts from the bondage and pains of sin. He wished, that is to say, that it should express precisely and in embracing terms what he himself conceived to be the *modus operandi* of divine love. . . .

‘For this most plenary indulgence no price

PREFACE

was to be paid ; the broken and the contrite heart was to be the only alms-giving ; so one shrine at least should remain pure from the corrupting influence of wealth. It was the assertion, in the bosom of Mother Church, so heavily bejewelled with the gifts of her penitents, of the pure Franciscan doctrine of poverty. But it was something more : if to the Portiuncula, poor, lowly, and without renown, this great spiritual privilege could be attached by a mere word, did it not stand merely as the emblem of a truth deeper and more universal ; and was not the indulgence a mere showing, elementary and superfluous, of that which, by the operation of divine grace, took place in every contrite heart ? If this could come about at Portiuncula, why not at every altar in Christendom ? ’

The figure of St. Francis is to me so overpoweringly beautiful, so literally compelling in its stimulus to thought and emotion, that I cannot promise, in spite of the bad odour in which ‘sequels’ stand in the literary world (more especially among critics), to write no more Franciscan plays ; but I think I can promise that, if I do, they shall only appear—so far as book-form is concerned—in some later re-issue of the present work.

L. H.

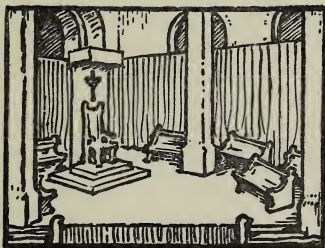
NOTE

The Author's acknowledgments are due to MESSRS. MACMILLAN for kind permission to reprint the song, 'Who knocks to-night so late?' from *Bethlehem, and other Poems*.

*Applications regarding the amateur acting rights
of these Plays should be made to the Secretary,
Incorporated Society of Authors, 1 Central Buildings,
Westminster, London, S. W. 1.*

CURE OF SOULS

(1216)



The scene is in the POPE'S Palace at Perugia, where in the early days of his pontificate, HONORIUS III. holds his court. At the entrance to the great council-chamber men-at-arms stand sentinel, to keep back the crowd of suppliants and petitioners gathered in the outer loggia: while from within, a fierce babble of contending voices makes itself

heard. From the curtain-closed doorway come a CARDINAL and his SECRETARY in hurried consultation. At the sight of this eminent personage, importunate Petitioners, hungry for attention, start clamouring each for himself.

PETITIONERS. My Lord Cardinal! My Lord!
My Lord! Speak for me to the Holy Father, that I
may be heard! . . . My Lord! Give me hearing!

[*The SECRETARY goes hastily on his errand:
the CARDINAL returns to the hall.*

[*Enter, from without, CARDINAL UGOLINO, with
SECRETARY ATTENDANT, followed by FRANCIS
and two of the Brethren.*

GUARD. Way, there! Make way for my Lord,
the Cardinal Ugolino! Stand back! Stand back!

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

UGOLINO. Wait here, little Brother; the Conclave is not yet over.

[UGOLINO and his SECRETARY pass into the hall. FRANCIS and the Brethren take their place in the waiting crowd; they stand patient and motionless, while those around them press restlessly against the guarded barriers. A bell sounds within. The curtains are slowly drawn apart, revealing the Conclave about to rise from its deliberation.

[With no order, and with little decorum, the Cardinals are continuing a debate which, by all the rules, has finished. To an accompaniment of angry gesticulations, the contending voices grow loud; and the clamour is like the clamour of the Petitioners outside, each trying to shout the other down. Through the general din, the main drift of the argument stumbles on.

CARDINALS. Heresy! Schism! . . . The Church has no place for heretics: the Holy Father himself cannot admit them! . . . He can let them be heard. . . . He cannot! He shall not! The voice of the Curia is against it. . . . It is not the Curia which decides finally. . . . The Curia speaks for the Church. . . . The Church has spoken by her Councils. . . . It is faith! It is dogma! It is creed! No power under Heaven can change it. . . . Let the Eastern Church first submit: we will hear her then—then only!

[So, vociferous, without pause, the babel of tongues goes on, while POPE HONORIUS continues to beat solemnly upon his bell. From

CURE OF SOULS

his seat under the POPE'S throne the CARDINAL SECRETARY OF STATE rises.

CARD. SEC. The Holy Father! . . . The Holy Father! . . . Silence for the Holy Father!

[The clamour subsides. With their individual enmities still unappeased, the Cardinals scramble back to their places.]

HONORIUS. My Lord Cardinals—Bishops, Archbishops : we have heard you ; you have all spoken ; debate is ended. What remains in this matter is for us alone. The encyclical, as amended and presented, you have heard read. You have voted upon it, and your votes are equal. We decide that it shall go forward. Produce it, that we may sign it.

[This pronouncement is heard with mingled murmurs of rage and satisfaction. The STATE SECRETARY presents the document kneeling. The POPE signs it.]

Roma locuta, causa finita.

[A trumpet sounds : the crowd, pressing against the barriers, cheers excitedly.]

CROWD. Life to the Pope! Long life to the Pope!

1ST CARD. Oh! Can I believe my ears—my eyes?

2ND CARD. You had better, my Lord Bishop : else you will be in schism—and will be damned.

1ST CARD. Monstrous!

2ND CARD. [*significantly*]. Oh? 'Monstrous'?

1ST CARD. With all submission, I say monstrous! —with all submission.

[Meanwhile the POPE has handed back the

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

encyclical. The STATE SECRETARY, kissing his ring, takes the document and passes it to another Secretary, who encloses it in a casket which the STATE SECRETARY then locks and seals. Again the trumpet sounds ; the SECRETARY goes out, bearing the casket aloft, attended by trumpeter and guard. The cheering crowd makes way with obeisance. Outside the trumpet sounds again.

HONORIUS. My Lord Secretary, what next ?

CARD. SEC. Nothing on the agenda, Holy Father. Outside there are petitioners waiting.

HONORIUS. Let them come another day. Have any here within, of this court, suit or petition to offer ?

CARD. SEC. Holy Father, my Lord Cardinal Ugolino, on behalf of another, waits to present a petition.

HONORIUS. Let him come.

[Immediately upon the HOLY FATHER'S sign of assent, the CARDINAL UGOLINO'S SECRETARY goes out to summon FRANCIS, whom he brings in alone. The CARDINAL himself, advancing to the POPE'S throne, kneels and kisses his ring. The POPE raises and kisses him. FRANCIS meanwhile kneels at a distance.

My Lord Son, what is it you wish ?

UGOLINO. A hearing, Holy Father, for one who comes with humble petition.

HONORIUS. Who is he ?

UGOLINO. Holy Father, it is our little Brother Francis, of the Friars Minor ; one that lives to serve God by serving his fellow men.

CURE OF SOULS

HONORIUS. Aye : we have heard tell of him.

UGOLINO. Since he entered Religion, Holy Father, he has in all things been humble and obedient to Holy Church : and wherever he goes men love and speak well of him.

HONORIUS. We have heard so ; and likewise of his Brethren in the Order. What do you ask for him, my Lord Son ?

UGOLINO. That he himself may present his petition.

HONORIUS. For what ?

UGOLINO. For his church of the Portiuncula, Holy Father, that has been given to him and his Brethren by the monks of St. Benedict. What his petition, he is here to say.

HONORIUS. Bring him ; we will hear him.

[UGOLINO *signals FRANCIS to approach. He rises, comes near, and kneels again.*

UGOLINO. Holy Father, this is he.

HONORIUS. Speak, my son. What have you to ask ?

FRANCIS. Holy Father, your blessing—

HONORIUS [*making the sign of the Cross*]. God bless you, my son.

FRANCIS. —for our little church of St. Mary of the Angels, called Portiuncula.

HONORIUS. His blessing is on it already, my son.

FRANCIS. That is true, Holy Father. Therefore—the same blessing for all that come thither to pray ; so that it may be known.

HONORIUS. The blessing is there, my son.

FRANCIS. Yes, Father.

UGOLINO [*correcting him*]. Holy Father.

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

FRANCIS [*accepting the correction*]. Holy Father.

HONORIUS. You need not kneel, my son. All that you have to say we will hear. [FRANCIS *rises*.] How would you have the blessing made known?

FRANCIS. By your word, Holy Father—for better assurance—because men's eyes are blind, and without aid cannot see God's light which is round them everywhere.

HONORIUS. An Indulgence, you mean? Ah! now we understand. It is a special Indulgence for your church that you are asking? Well?—on what terms?

FRANCIS. To all who come there, confessed and truly penitent, forgiveness and remission of pain for all their sins, in this world and the next.

HONORIUS. Of *all* their sins, you say?

FRANCIS. Yes, Holy Father, if they have repented of all. If they have not, then are they not penitent.

HONORIUS. But do you not understand, little Brother, how Indulgences are given—upon certain terms, and for a certain time only?

[FRANCIS *remains silent*.

UGOLINO. The little Brother is very simple, Holy Father. I do not think that he quite understands.

HONORIUS. Hear, then; and we will explain. You know, my son, that forgiveness of sin rests with God.

FRANCIS. Yes, Father.

UGOLINO. *Holy* Father.

FRANCIS. Holy Father.

HONORIUS. And that only God, by His great mercy, can forgive a man the sins of a whole lifetime, and remit the due penalty thereof when he comes to die.

CURE OF SOULS

FRANCIS. Even so, Holy Father; and being in the hands of God's mercy, there is none we can wish more merciful. Neither can we invent a greater mercy than that which is already found in Christ. But we being fools as well as sinners, Father——

UGOLINO. *Holy Father.*

FRANCIS. Mother Church speaks to us by you, to make known more surely what is already true.

HONORIUS [*to UGOLINO*]. He is not so simple, my Lord Son, but he speaks with understanding. . . . Aye? [*To FRANCIS.*] And for instance?

FRANCIS. As by Indulgence, Holy Father; so that the simple may know.

HONORIUS. We could not have said it better ourself! . . . So then, that this chapel of yours may bring honour to our blessed Lady and help to all that are truly penitent—what is it exactly that you have come to ask?

FRANCIS. That God's way among sinners be made known—by your voice, Holy Father.

HONORIUS. To which end we are to give a declaration of Indulgence. Well? In what terms is it to be?

[*He pauses : FRANCIS does not answer.*]
Speak, my son! it must be put in words, so that we may give it you in writing.

FRANCIS. Not in writing, Holy Father, but in Heaven.

HONORIUS. When we have it in writing, my son, we will see that it gets to Heaven. . . . That is what we are here for.

FRANCIS [*joyfully*]. Ah! That is true!

HONORIUS. You see, my Lord Son, he is not so

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

simple after all. . . . Well? In what terms are we to tell Heaven?

FRANCIS. Let it be known, Holy Father—as in Heaven so in earth—that all who come to Portiuncula to pray, having confessed and repented of their sins, do thereby, and without any gift of alms, obtain forgiveness now, and remission of all pains hereafter. . . . Amen.

HONORIUS. Without alms? Why without alms?

FRANCIS. For, as so great a mercy is beyond price, needs must it be free.

HONORIUS. But to come without alms—is it not to come without charity?

FRANCIS. Having charity in their hearts, Holy Father.

HONORIUS. But what profit or reward will it bring to your church, my son?

FRANCIS. The love men will have for it.

HONORIUS. Be it as you will, my son; your Church of the Portiuncula, though rich in hearts, will be the poorer.

FRANCIS. We wish to be poor, Father.

UGOLINO. *Holy* Father.

HONORIUS. An Indulgence without alms, then: and of how many years?

FRANCIS. Years, Father?

UGOLINO. *Holy* Father.

HONORIUS. How many years' remittance to the holy souls in Purgatory of the pains due for their sins, my son? [*Then to UGOLINO, as FRANCIS stands silent.*] Yes: you were right; he *is* simple.

FRANCIS. Holy Father, it is not years I am asking for, but souls.

CURE OF SOULS

HONORIUS. Souls? Aye; but souls live in Purgatory; and there must endure pain. Is the Indulgence you ask, for a year, or for twenty, or for a hundred?

FRANCIS. For ever, Holy Father.

HONORIUS. For ever? And that is to be for all sins committed till then?

FRANCIS. And repented, Father.

HONORIUS. What are we to say, my Lords?

CARD. SEC. This man is asking for a Plenary Indulgence, your Holiness. The Church gives it only to those that go in the Crusades, or as pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre, or to the shrines of the Apostles. In a case such as this, it is never done.

2ND. CARD. Nor has it ever been asked, Holy Father. Such a thing is monstrous, unheard of.

HONORIUS. You hear, my son? . . . We don't do such things.

FRANCIS. No, Holy Father. But God does; and you are here to declare it.

HONORIUS. Aye: but who are you to ask for it?

FRANCIS. Holy Father, it is not I that ask for it, but our Lord Jesus Christ, on whose behalf I am come.

2ND. CARD. Monstrous! I say, monstrous!

HONORIUS. And for that—must I depend on your word only?

FRANCIS. No, Holy Father. It is there written for us in Holy Scripture. For this cause He came down to earth, and went back to Heaven; leaving His Church to declare it.

HONORIUS. My Lords, he answers us. What are we to say? Have we no rule to guide us in such matters?

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

CARD. SEC. We have a rule, Sanctity. In the Sacred Curia, only a year ago, this very question was raised, because, of late years, Indulgences had become too many, and too easy to obtain. The Sacred Curia, therefore, decided that henceforth these should be granted only by rule.

HONORIUS. Ah! there we have it.

CARD. SEC. That rule, Holy Father, still holds good.

HONORIUS. The rule was made by our Predecessor?

2ND CARD. By him, speaking for Holy Church.

HONORIUS. What was the rule? Have you it there?

CARD. SEC. That all Indulgences should be limited, Holy Father, to a fixed scale.

[*His SECRETARY hands him a paper.*]

HONORIUS. So? Let us hear it.

CARD. SEC. [*reading*]. To any shrine, or altar, containing the complete body of a saint, or any relic of things material appertaining to our Lord or one of His Apostles, an Indulgence may be granted not exceeding three hundred years. For any lesser relic, an Indulgence not exceeding one hundred years. For any church, containing no relic, upon the feast of the day of its dedication, an Indulgence may be granted not exceeding fifty years. The rule has been made, Holiness, and must be kept.

HONORIUS. As a rule: except when the Church decrees otherwise.

2ND CARD. With submission, Holy Father; having laid down the rule the Church has no occasion to decree otherwise.

CURE OF SOULS

HONORIUS. Has *had* no occasion, you mean, my Lord. [*He turns to FRANCIS*]. . . . You hear what these say, my son? A rule has been made to be observed. You must not seek for your church a greater gift than we can grant—a gift given to so few.

FRANCIS. It is not my church, Holy Father: it is our Lord's.

HONORIUS. Aye: but it is your asking.

FRANCIS. Not for myself, Holy Father, but for Him, that His promise may be fulfilled there.

HONORIUS. Doubt not it will be, my son; if it be His will. But there is the rule, which in such case as this ordains a time limit. Therefore we must name a time.

FRANCIS. What is Time, Holy Father, but a thing for man's making? Time is mortal; and when man dies Time dies with him. Eternity is not Time, Father.

HONORIUS. It is Time without end, Brother.

FRANCIS. How then can one divide it? Were man so without end, he would not be mortal. Man is born only in this life; and dies. But the soul lives when the body perishes. So is it with Time, Father. Time dies, when the flesh of this world which was its covering is gone. Then, like the soul, born into a new world, it stands naked to eternity, where Time means nothing. Therefore, when you speak for God, Holy Father, do not speak of Time.

HONORIUS. I speak only for the rule, my son; which, like Time, is mortal and may be changed.

[*At this there are murmurs among the Cardinals, who have listened with a growing uneasiness.*]

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

This church of yours : what relic has it ? What saints lie there entombed ?

FRANCIS. Our Lord is there Himself, in the Sacrament of the Altar. No relic in the world is so great as that, Holy Father.

HONORIUS. True, my son ; nor does any work greater miracles. Therefore an Indulgence is given as an aid to that which is less.

FRANCIS. Give, therefore, Holy Father, more aid to that which is least : our chapel of the Portiuncula is a very little one. Yet our Lord comes there !

HONORIUS. He comes everywhere, my son.

FRANCIS. Yes, Holy Father : and everywhere there are sinners that repent.

HONORIUS. And are all these to have Indulgences for the asking, my son ; and be freed from punishment ?

FRANCIS. Those that repent, Holy Father, are already punished in their own hearts ; and in their bodies it goes hard with them, having once sinned.

HONORIUS. That is in this life, my son.

FRANCIS. Where repentance comes in an instant : and yet endures unto eternity !

HONORIUS. My Lords, what say you to that ?

2ND CARD. Sanctity ! Because in your hands lies the power of the keys, shall the door always be left open ?

FRANCIS. Aye !

2ND CARD. And so stand unguarded for evil-doers to enter ?

HONORIUS. Aye ? What say you to that, my son ?

CURE OF SOULS

FRANCIS. He that does not repent cannot enter.

HONORIUS. My Lord, he has answered you.

2ND CARD. Then where is the Church? Thrust aside, dishonoured, contemned: useless! Holiness, it cannot be permitted!

HONORIUS. Cannot? How do you make that, my Lord? To the Holy Places this privilege already has been given.

2ND. CARD. Aye; but for those Holy Places men lay down their lives, endure peril, tribulation, persecution. They are the very heart of Christendom. And there are the relics by which great miracles have been wrought, showing forth to all men the glory of God and of His Christ!

HONORIUS. It is not only by relics, my Lord Son, that miracles have been wrought. In places where men have dreamed dreams and seen visions, there have been miracles. Then—why not here? Who knows? If this man have seen a vision (which we have not seen) holiness may be there, though we know it not.

2ND CARD. There has been no vision, Holy Father!

HONORIUS. If I tell you, my son, that while this man spoke, I myself had a vision—would you deny it to me, because you yourself saw nothing?

2ND CARD. If your Holiness means——

HONORIUS. Hast thou heard and understood, little Brother, what all these say?

FRANCIS. Yes, Holy Father.

HONORIUS. What is your answer?

FRANCIS. I have none, Holy Father. For these speak with wisdom and learning, having know-

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

ledge of many things about which I know nothing. Also they have the gift of words, which I have not. And I am glad, Father, to be without these things—for they are not necessary.

HONORIUS. How not necessary? Is not here a cause which needs pleading?

FRANCIS. No, Father. For if it is the will of God, it will be done.

HONORIUS. I doubt not. But God uses instruments, Brother.

FRANCIS. Even so, Holy Father. And if I stand at thy door silent, day and night, till thou grant my request, I shall show God's will better than by speaking. For when men see me thus, Holy Father, will it not be very plain that here is one who, without words, has yet something to say: and, without wisdom or power to do it, something in hand that needs doing? And because I do not plead, Father, though I be helpless, will it not strike you the more: 'Here is some matter, too great for a man's pleading, which still stays at my gate, and stands day and night before me'?

HONORIUS. Nevertheless, it is a cause, Brother, which needs care.

FRANCIS. What then, Holy Father?

HONORIUS. And that may mean delay.

FRANCIS. And then, Holy Father?

HONORIUS. Also some doubt—whether, in the end, we can say more than we have said now.

FRANCIS. And then, Holy Father?

HONORIUS. Why, Brother, before this cause is decided, you and I may both be dead.

FRANCIS. And then, Holy Father?

CURE OF SOULS

HONORIUS. Then God will judge us according to our works, whether we have done ill or well.

FRANCIS. Therefore do well now, Holy Father ; since God has given you holiness to declare His will.

HONORIUS. My Lords, this man says he cannot argue. Which of you is ready to stand against him ? for I cannot.

SEVERAL CARDS. [*in great agitation*]. Holy Father, it is not done ! It cannot be done ! It must not be done ! It never has been done !

2ND. CARD. Holiness, it is monstrous ! The rule is against it. The Church forbids it.

HONORIUS. What do you say to that, Brother ?

FRANCIS. I say nothing, Holy Father. If you say it is to be done, the ' is not ' and the ' cannot ' and the ' must not be done ' will all go.

HONORIUS. My Lords, you cannot deny that what he says there is true.

2ND CARD. The Church does not make rules to break them.

HONORIUS. This rule, my lord, is a rule of discipline, not of faith.

[*At this there is loud murmuring from some of the Cardinals.*

Little Brother, we have heard your petition ; and your prayer is granted.

[*He signs to the CARDINAL SECRETARY ; and they consult together. The other Cardinals form into groups ; discussion grows loud.*

2ND. CARD. Monstrous ! Monstrous !

1ST CARD. ' Monstrous ' ? Take care, Brother ! ' Monstrous ' is a dangerous word. If the Holy

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

Father heard you, there would be no plenary Indulgence for *you*.

2ND. CARD. When it is written—when the Holy Father has signed it, I will submit and be silent. Till then, I have a right to say as I think : and I say, ‘ Monstrous ! ’

[*His consultation over, the POPE strikes his bell. The murmur of voices dies down : the Cardinals resume their places. While the POPE gives out the terms of the Indulgence, slowly and with pauses, a Secretary makes note of them.*

HONORIUS. The terms of the Indulgence are as follows : The Indulgence to be known as the Indulgence of the Portiuncula. . . . Henceforth we grant . . . that whosoever shall come and enter this church . . . being truly penitent and having confessed . . . shall be absolved from all guilt and penalty of sin . . . both in this world and in the next . . . from the day of their baptism to the hour of their coming into this church. . . . And we ordain that this Indulgence shall hold good . . . every year, and for ever . . . upon the feast of the church’s dedication (that is, the Feast of St. Mary of the Angels) from first vespers to vespers of the day following.

2ND CARD. Holy Father, with all submission, I protest !

HONORIUS. Roma locuta, causa finita.

[*The murmur of protestation and discussion is still heard : the Cardinals move from their seats. UGOLINO leads FRANCIS forward. They both prostrate themselves : FRANCIS kisses the*

CURE OF SOULS

POPE'S foot; UGOLINO *kisses his ring. The POPE signs to them to rise, and embraces UGOLINO.*

My Lord Cardinal, find us more men like this little Brother of yours ; and we shall do well.

[*He turns from them to the CARDINAL SECRETARY, who now claims his attention ; and FRANCIS, his mission accomplished, moves to withdraw. The delighted signals of his two waiting Brethren have caught his eye ; he advances toward them.*

HONORIUS. Wait, my son ! Before you go, this must be given you in writing ; so that you may have it safe—all signed and sealed.

FRANCIS. Why in writing here, Holy Father, when it is all written in Heaven ?

HONORIUS. Aye : but where is your legal proof ? Is it not rather foolish to go before you have obtained it ?

FRANCIS. Holy Father, if this thing be of God, I leave the proof of it in His Hands ; nor do I need other. Our Lord is the Recorder ; our Lady the Keeper ; and the Angels are the witnesses. Holy Father, you have given me all that I ask : and yonder are my Brothers waiting. Your blessing for them too, Holy Father.

HONORIUS [*to the SECRETARY*]. Enough, let be : what you have done is sufficient. [*To FRANCIS.*] Go, my son : God is with you. The sitting of the Court is over.

[*The POPE descends from his throne : Bearers come forward with the canopy : the Cardinals ranged in due order make ready to follow. UGOLINO accompanies FRANCIS to the door.*

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

UGOLINO. Little Brother, you have done a wonder. But had I known what you were going to ask, I should not have brought you.

FRANCIS. No, Holiness: I knew that—or I guessed it. That is why I asked to speak for myself.

UGOLINO [*shaking his head at him*]. Little Brother, you are not so simple as I thought.

FRANCIS. No, Holiness: we never are.

[*And now the happy Brothers have caught hold of him, and, while UGOLINO returns to the Presence, the Brothers lead him away.*

HONORIUS. There goes a very dangerous man.

2ND. CARD. Indeed, I think so, Holy Father!

UGOLINO [*politely deprecating*]. To whom, Holy Father?

HONORIUS. To the Devil, my son.

[*The 2ND CARDINAL looks his mind, but does not say anything.*

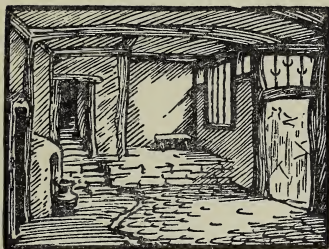
1ST CARD. [*maliciously*]. Say 'Monstrous.' It isn't in writing, Brother.

[*The trumpets sound: the POPE'S procession goes out: the hall empties. In the adjoining chapel is heard the singing of men's and boys' voices. Once more the Will of God has been announced to men. The Church moves on her way.*

CURTAIN

LOVERS MEETING

(1240)



It is winter. The Community-house of the Friars Minor in Perugia lies open toward the street, through a doorway of roughly hewn timber. Exterior steps lead down; interior steps lead up to the workshops and cells of the community. In a corner of one of these BROTHER GILES sits across a bench, very busy at shoe-mending. As he works, he sings; his hammer

beating time to the music. In the pause of his song, one hears in the distance a tucket of trumpets blown, to which he pays no heed.

GILES [*singing*].

‘ Who knocks to-night so late ? ’

The weary porter said.

Three kings stood at the gate ;

Each with a crown on head.

The serving-man bowed down ;

The inn was full, he knew.

Said he, ‘ In all this town

Is no fit place for you.’

[*While he sings, BROTHER RUFUS enters from the street, laden with vegetables.*

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

A light the manger lit ;

There lay the Mother meek.

Said they ' This place is fit——'

[*Trumpets sound again.*]

RUFUS. What makes you so busy, Brother ?

GILES [*hammering as he sings*]. ' Here is the rest we seek.'

RUFUS. Eh ? Can you not answer ?

GILES. Brother Juniper left me these shoes to mend ; and I a poor hand at it.

RUFUS. Ah ? I saw him down by the walls just now, along with the beggars. There was a great crowd looking over.

GILES. What to see ?

RUFUS. Along the valley troops marching.

GILES [*stopping his work*]. Is there another war—already ?

RUFUS. No : only the old one. Crusaders from France and Milan, so I was told. In the gate there were five knights on horseback—one talking to the Podesta.

GILES. Are they coming here ?

RUFUS. Why, no : there are thousands. We shouldn't have room. But they have buyers all about the market, wanting horses. One of them spoke to me.

GILES. Had you a horse to sell, Brother ?

RUFUS. *He* wasn't wanting a horse. He was asking me (seeing I was one of them) where the Brothers lived ; and whether——

[*Enter an OLD BEGGAR trailing a piece of cloth.*]

BEGGAR. What's the use ? Fool ! He's only

LOVERS MEETING

given me half ! What 's the use of half ? It won't cover my legs.

GILES. God give you patience, Brother. What 's the matter ?

BEGGAR. Matter ? To this there 's not matter enough ! That 's what 's the matter.

[GILES, *leaving his work, comes down, takes hold of the cloth, and examines it. RUFUS takes in the vegetables, then returns and begins to draw water from a fountain set in the wall.*

BEGGAR [*peevishly snatching back the cloth*]. Who are you ?

GILES. Not of enough matter to be worth naming. Brother Giles, they call me.

BEGGAR. Giles is an ill name. I knew a man named Giles, was hanged for it.

GILES. Because he was named Giles ?

BEGGAR. Aye. There was another named Giles had done that which he was hanged for. So his name hanged him.

GILES. Who were *you* hanging just now ?

BEGGAR. I ? I was hanging nobody.

GILES. Oh, yes, you were, Brother ; and with a will—had there been rope enough. [*He holds out his hand for the cloth.*] Come ; was it that he made this too short, that you cursed him ?

BEGGAR. Oh ? *That* fool ?

GILES. Show it me.

BEGGAR. That won't cover my legs. And 'twas my legs that wanted covering.

GILES. It will, if you kneel down, Brother.

BEGGAR. I ? Kneel ? If I did, I'd never get up again !

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

GILES. There is the making of a good end, Brother.

BEGGAR. Stop your 'brothering'! I'm not your brother. I should think you'd a flea for your father, from the look of you!

GILES. Very likely, Brother—little Father, I mean. . . . Who gave you this cloak?

BEGGAR. 'Tis not a cloak; 'tis but the half of one.

GILES. Yet it is a cloak in the making, if I give you the rest of it.

[He goes back to his bench and picks up the cloak which lies there.]

BEGGAR [*contemptuous of his benefactors*]. Oh! Here's another of 'em.

GILES [*measuring piece against piece*]. Let me see: where should it begin?

BEGGAR [*quick to the situation*]. The top half, with the hood to it, mind! What he gave me was but the bottom half.

GILES [*nodding and smiling*]. The top half as you say, Brother. [*And he continues his measuring.*] Brother Rufus, have you a knife or scissors about you?

RUFUS. I have only my teeth, Brother; and yours are better. If you bite through the hem, you can tear the rest easily.

BEGGAR [*impatiently*]. Here, fools! What'll you be tearing up two for, to make one? You've only to give me the top half, and swap me the bottom half: then I get a cloak, and the thing's done.

GILES. Very true. What a brain you have, Brother! [*Keeping the half cloak, he gives him his*

LOVERS MEETING

own.] This saves making, or mending. As you say, the thing is done. . . . Who gave you this, did you say ?

BEGGAR [*as he arrays himself*]. Do you know a greater fool in the world than yourself ?

GILES. No.

BEGGAR. Well, it was him, then.

RUFUS. That 'll be Brother Juniper, I 'm thinking.

GILES. No : Juniper would have been wiser. He would have given all, not half.

BEGGAR. Aye : so he would, if he had not given the other half to a leper. . . . I could kill that leper !

GILES. No need now, Brother.

RUFUS. So 'twas Brother Juniper, was it ? That 's the third gone this month.

GILES [*kissing it*]. O cloak of Brother Juniper ! Were a king to come now and offer me his robe in exchange, I would not take it. Little Father, I thank you for your good bounty. This is better for me.

BEGGAR. Say no more, then ! If both be suited, there is less to complain of. Now I must haste, for I have business.

GILES. God prosper it, Brother. If you have further need, come and tell me.

[*He returns to his work-bench.*]

BEGGAR. Oh, do not fear ! To-night I shall be rich.

RUFUS. Rich ? How, Brother ?

BEGGAR. Have ye not heard, the King of France comes here to-day ?

RUFUS. The King of France ? Why, what brings him ?

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

BEGGAR. His horse, I suppose. That, and the Pope's orders. He goes to the Holy Land to fight for our Lord's deliverance from King Herod, and from Pontiff Pilate. . . . I thought King Herod was dead.

RUFUS. He won't stay here.

BEGGAR. He will pass through. And they say that, every city he enters, he gives such alms, beggars are made rich by it. But I don't wait here for him : I shall out to meet him. When he comes I shall strip myself naked—as a sign of humility. Then, if he make me not rich, God make him a leper ! . . . Farewell, fool-brother !

GILES. Farewell ! God bless you in your riches, Brother.

[The BEGGAR goes, and GILES continues his hammering. RUFUS takes up the half cloak, and begins handling it.]

RUFUS. 'Tis said he is a wondrously good man—that some day he is like to become a saint.

GILES. Yonder poor old beggar, do you say ? I should not wonder.

RUFUS. No, no, Brother. The King of France, I meant : ' good King Louis,' as they call him.

GILES. 'Tis a name of sweet savour. One of our Brothers, lately out of France, brought us a gentle message from him—because we are followers ; and all that he then told of him was good. *[Then, as RUFUS throws down the cloak beside him.]* Hey, Brother ! when Juniper returns, he will be needing a new cloak. Canst thou find him one ?

RUFUS. I can make one for him : or one for thee.

GILES. Not for me, Brother ; but for him as

LOVERS MEETING

quickly as thou canst, else for pity I shall be tempted to give this back to him. Now must I make it so that I can wear it.

[He takes up the cloak, and is about to go.]

RUFUS. Sew thyself into it, Brother; else thou wilt lose it—as did Juniper.

[The going of BROTHER GILES is arrested by the entrance of BROTHER HUMBLE, who comes running, very eager and out of breath.]

HUMBLE. Have you heard? O Brothers, have you heard? The great King of France is here, in this city; and men be all about, seeking him!

RUFUS. Oh? So the old beggar was right, was he?

HUMBLE. Did you know, Brothers?

RUFUS. Only what was told us—that they were expecting him.

HUMBLE. He was here before any knew of it. Shall we not go, Brothers, and see him?

RUFUS [*discouragingly*]. There will be enough to see him without us, Brother.

[HUMBLE stands disappointed and abashed.]

GILES [*kindly*]. Run, Brother, run: and when you have seen him—you will have seen him.

[For a moment HUMBLE stands hesitating; but now others are running down the street with cries of excitement, and catching the infection he runs too.]

RUFUS [*with a grunt*]. If he be not back for his bell-ringing, there'll be trouble.

GILES [*now on his way out*]. We can do it for him, Brother.

RUFUS. What does he want to see a king for?

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

[*There is no answer : GILES has gone. RUFUS takes up two pitchers of water and prepares to follow him. Then up from the street, in the hood and cloak of a pilgrim, comes KING LOUIS, followed by an Attendant Squire. At a signal from LOUIS, his companion goes across and touches RUFUS on the shoulder. RUFUS turns.*

LOUIS. Are you the Brother that I spoke with ?

RUFUS. At the gate, Signor ? A covered knight spoke to me, but his face I could not see.

LOUIS. It was I. Was it here you said that I should find Brother Giles ? Is this his house ?

RUFUS. He has no house, Signor ; but he lives here.

LOUIS. Bring me to him, quickly ; or him to me.

RUFUS. Who shall I say, Signor ?

LOUIS. My name does not matter. 'A friend,' tell him ; one that has long desired to see him.

RUFUS. Ah ? So you know him, Signor ?

LOUIS. I shall know him—when I see him.

RUFUS. I will go, Signor.

[*He goes.*

SQUIRE. He does not know you, my lord.

LOUIS. How should he, friend ? Here, all alike, we are strangers.

SQUIRE. Not so much all alike, my lord, as you did wish. The Podesta had caught the news, and was there waiting.

LOUIS. Nevertheless we escaped him.

SQUIRE. I think only for a time, my lord.

LOUIS. 'Twill be time enough, friend. For to see this little Brother is all I come for.

LOVERS MEETING

SQUIRE. I had never heard of him, my lord.

LOUIS. And I—have never seen him. . . . Oh, there! See! There he is!

[The cry is uttered before GILES has actually appeared. Now he comes, followed by RUFUS.]

SQUIRE. Are you so sure of him, my lord?

[But between LOUIS and BROTHER GILES there is no room for doubt. Almost simultaneously, as for the first time their eyes meet, there breaks from each a cry of profound joy and satisfaction. One moment they stand at gaze; the next, with welcoming gesture, run together and embrace. Three times they embrace; then, with linked and extended arms, remain looking at each other, in a deep communion of love. For a while RUFUS stands watching them with grave and considerate regard; then gently approaching the King's Companion, who waits at the threshold, he speaks.]

RUFUS. Your friend, Signor, has found a welcome. Will not you also come in and rest?

SQUIRE. I am content to stay here, Brother. And *your* friend—who is he?

RUFUS. That is Brother Giles. It must have been long since they met.

SQUIRE. Never before, Brother.

RUFUS [*astonished*]. Who, then, or what is he?

SQUIRE [*after a pause*]. My master.

RUFUS. One, surely with a good heart, and of great understanding?

SQUIRE. He has both, Brother. . . . But here is something we understand not.

RUFUS. Look how they join—like brothers!

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

SQUIRE. Of one race. Say, was this Brother of yours not born—a prince ?

RUFUS. No, Signor : only a poor man, like all the rest of us.

[A bell has struck the hour. In the distance a trumpet sounds.]

SQUIRE. Strange : oh, most strange ! . . . What can it mean ?

RUFUS. I think, Signor, they are lovers.

SQUIRE. Strangers, that know each other !

RUFUS. Indeed, it would seem so.

[Cell doors open. The FATHER PRIOR enters. Others of the Brethren follow.]

PRIOR *[to the BROTHER who first enters]*. How is this, Brother ? The hour has gone, but there is no bell for us.

RUFUS. Brother Humble has gone out, Father Prior. I will ring it for him.

Enter BROTHER HUMBLE, running.

HUMBLE. There ! there ! I'm late ; and now he'll be gone, and I shan't see him ! Oh, dear, dear, dear !

[He takes the bell-rope, and begins ringing.]

Brothers begin to come in, halting at sight of the lovers who still stand in silent embrace.

Down below in the city, a trumpet sounds three times. LOUIS and BROTHER GILES draw apart, each making upon the other the sign of the Cross.

SQUIRE. See, now they are parting !

RUFUS *[also crossing himself]*. Pacem aeternam dona eis, Domine ! Et lux perpetua luceat eis.

LOVERS MEETING

[LOUIS and BROTHER GILES have embraced for the last time. As they part, GILES turns and goes quickly up to his cell, LOUIS back to his Companion.

LOUIS. Take my hand quick, and lead me, for I am blind! The trumpet signals for us; and we must go. Ah! Friend! Where art thou?

SQUIRE. My lord, I was too full for speaking. Have hold of me, and come!

[As, with joined hands, they go out, BROTHER JUNIPER enters. He turns and looks at them.

JUNIPER. Oh? So he's been here, has he: the wise man! The Lord bless it to him!

RUFUS. He? Who?

[Again a trumpet is thrice blown.

JUNIPER. Yonder man—just gone out.

PRIOR. Do you know him, Brother Juniper?

JUNIPER. Know him? Didn't ye hear the trumpets? Don't ye hear 'em now? Who is it has trumpets blown for him?

PRIOR. Well, who, then?

JUNIPER. Sure: the King of France; who else?

ALL. The King of France!

JUNIPER [pointing]. That little man yonder, under the grey cloak, is him.

[They all crowd to look; BROTHER HUMBLE, turning, sees BROTHER GILES, back from his cell, with his shoe-mendings in his hand.

HUMBLE. Brother Giles, dost thou hear? Didst thou know?

SEVERAL. Tell us, Brother Giles: tell us!

[They all gather round him.

GILES. What is it, Brothers?

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

PRIOR. That was King Louis of France, Brother !

GILES. Happy France !

PRIOR. Didst thou *know* ?

GILES. Yes, Father ; when I saw him, I knew—though how, I know not ; for I looked not to his head, but only to his heart.

[*Vexed, and bewildered, the Brothers all begin talking together, none waiting till another has finished.*]

THE BROTHERS [*together and disjointedly*]. But why came he ? What said he ? Did you not speak to him ; nor he to you ? And knowing all the time, you let him go, without telling us ? And he a great king, doing us so great an honour ! And you treating him like a brother and an equal ! Why, Brother Giles, how wast thou not afraid ?

GILES. Why should I fear one that I love ?

RUFUS. But why, then, didst thou not speak to him ?

GILES [*giving the shoes*]. Here are my mendings, Juniper. . . . Why should I speak, Brother ? Words are no use, save to show what is in men's minds. But when he and I had looked on each other, we needed no words to tell us anything. That I loved him, that he loved me, was plain : that we had in our hearts no separate desire was plain also. We had but to look at each other . . . it was enough.

JUNIPER. The little Brother is right, Brothers ! And had he made this as right, I wouldn't be talking, either. But there, look ! Call you that a mending ?

[*He pulls off the patch as he speaks.*]

GILES. I'm sorry, Brother ; I'm sorry !

LOVERS MEETING

JUNIPER. Oh, you 've a great heart, but you are a bad shoemaker! . . . Come! I'll show you.

[*So saying, JUNIPER leads the way back to the work-bench, and sits down on it.*

PRIOR. Leave them together, Brothers. They are a pair, and we cannot mend them.

[*And as it is for a meal that the bell has summoned them, the Brethren all pass out to the adjoining refectory. JUNIPER sorts out his tools, and begins cutting and hammering. GILES, standing behind, leans over with affectionate embrace, and watches him. JUNIPER looks up to explain.*

JUNIPER. I'm thinking of the poor fellow that's got to wear them.

GILES. They are mine, Brother.

JUNIPER. Sure: I know that. . . . Now, look, and learn something! Else, if there's shoemaking in Heaven, they won't put *you* to it! . . . That's sure.

[*He returns to business, and BROTHER GILES resumes his interrupted song.*

GILES.

A light the manger lit;
There lay the Mother meek.
Said they, 'This place is fit:
Here is the rest we seek.'

They loosed their latchet strings;
So stood they all unshod.
Come in, ye kings, ye kings,
And kiss the Feet of God!

[*Far away in the distance a trumpet is blown*

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

thrice. BROTHER GILES stands upright to listen. BROTHER JUNIPER stops, turns, looks up at him, and sees his face tender and full of radiance. Laying down his tool, he takes hold of BROTHER GILES' sleeve and kisses it; then resumes his hammering.
[*Again, more distantly, the trumpet is blown.*]

CURTAIN

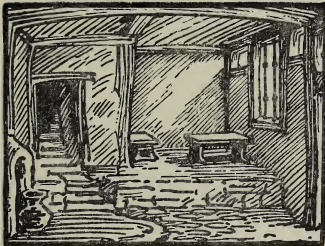
NOTE

‘*St. Louis, King of France, hearing the exceeding great fame of Brother Giles, determined at all costs to visit him personally; for which reason he came to Perugia, where the said Brother Giles lived at that time. And coming to the door of the community-house, as an unknown pilgrim, he asked for Brother Giles, not telling the porter who he was that asked. The porter therefore went to Brother Giles, and told him there was a pilgrim at the door asking for him; wherefor immediately, with great fervour of spirit, he came out of his cell and ran to the door; and without further questioning and without even having seen each other before, with the greatest devotion inclining themselves, they embraced and kissed one another with such familiarity as though for a long while they had been together in intimate friendship. But with all this neither one nor the other spoke; but they stood thus embracing each other, with this sign of the love of charity between them, in silence. And after they had stood thus a great space without either speaking a word to the other, they departed from each other, and St. Louis went on his journey and Brother Giles returned to his cell.*’

Little Flowers of St. Francis.

THE FOOL'S ERRAND

(1243)



At his bench in the Community-house at Perugia, BROTHER JUNIPER sits cobbling a pair of shoes. He is now an old man; but in spite of its ugliness his face is still rather like a child's, with its look of foolish innocence which nothing can change. To-day there is an added expression of dazed wonder, as of one who has seen vision or ghost; and is not quite sure which;

and while he hammers the leather upon his block, timing word to blow, he talks to himself.

JUNIPER. I am ! . . . I am ! . . . I am ! . . .

[BROTHER GILES, *descending the stairs, hears him, halts in the doorway for a moment, peeps curiously, then advances.*

GILES. What are you saying ' I am ' for, Brother ?

JUNIPER. Sure, to remind myself.

GILES. What of ?

JUNIPER. That I 'm Brother Juniper—the fool.

GILES. What should make you forget it, Brother ?

JUNIPER. Huh ! I 've had enough happen to me to-day to make me forget anything. [*He resumes his hammering.*] I am ! . . . I am ! . . . I am ! . . .

[GILES *watches him patiently awhile, then speaks.*

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

GILES. Are you going to tell me, Brother ?

JUNIPER. If I start talking, I'll never stop myself ; and here 's a shoe to be mended that can't wait.

GILES. You talk, Brother, while I mend it.

JUNIPER [*with affectionate contempt*]. You ? . . . I'll have to watch you. . . . D'you know a welt when you see it ?

GILES. I've mended my own shoes, Brother—you having taught me. There ! Look at them !

[*Seating himself beside JUNIPER, he lifts his feet for inspection, then gently but firmly begins to oust JUNIPER from his place.*

JUNIPER [*after inspecting the shoes*]. Well, it isn't in mortal sin you did that. I'll forgive you. . . .

But I'm going to keep my eye on you ; mind that !

GILES [*taking up the shoes*]. Yes, Brother. Now begin !

[*Suddenly JUNIPER delivers himself explosively.*

JUNIPER. Laugh !

[*BROTHER GILES yields himself heartily to the provocation. Sight of JUNIPER's grim earnestness keeps him going. Then, sobering to business, he takes up his task ; but JUNIPER has not yet done with him.*

JUNIPER. Now cry !

[*At this GILES laughs the more. JUNIPER, with a lenient kick, while reiterating his command, calls him to order.*

JUNIPER. On holy obedience I tell you to cry.

[*GILES does his best, but makes a poor show of it.*

JUNIPER. You laugh better than you cry ; but you mean well. Now for it !

[*He pauses, ruminates, takes a breath, and begins.*

THE FOOL'S ERRAND

JUNIPER. I was sitting here. . . . You 'll cry in good earnest, before I 've done telling you ! . . .

[GILES is wise, and makes no answer to the challenge. But JUNIPER still has a difficulty in getting started, and dropping the tone of narrative, turns to question.

JUNIPER. Have you ever been tempted of the Devil, Brother ?

GILES. Very often.

JUNIPER. What d'you do for it ?

GILES. I do as our Lord did : I tell him to get behind me.

JUNIPER. Does he ?

GILES. Sometimes yes : sometimes no.

JUNIPER. Ah ! Our Lord can do it ; but I can't trust myself when I 've got the Devil behind me. . . . Why ? Because I 'm weak in the back. . . . No ; what I do is make him go in front of me. I put him in blinkers ; I give him a heavy load ; I tell him I 'll be kind to him ; I tell him if he 'll go where I want him I 'll do him a service ; then, when I 've got him well on the trot, I just leave him. And with him not looking behind, and me not looking in front, before he 's got there we 've parted company—for that time, at any rate. . . . That 's my way, Brother.

GILES. Where do you tell him to go, Juniper ?

JUNIPER. Tell him to go to Hell, of course.

GILES. How do you load him ?

JUNIPER. With kindness and compassion. He doesn't like it.

GILES. And what service do you do him ?

JUNIPER. Getting him back to Hell where he 's

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

come from, and where he wants to be. He gets a rest there—from tempting people: the only place where he does. . . . Has it ever struck you, Brother Giles, that if the Devil stayed in Hell he 'd be sinless?

GILES. Sinless, Brother?

JUNIPER. Harming nobody.

GILES. But in Hell, Brother, pride, and wrath, and envy do still devour him; he hates God, loves darkness, seeks power to do evil.

JUNIPER. Ah; you've answered me! Give me back my mendings: I'm no good at talking.

GILES. No, no, Brother; for 'twas not that you meant to tell me—was it?

JUNIPER. I meant to tell you how the Devil came tempting me, just; and how it all turned to blessing. Ah! the Lord'll crack him out of his misery, someday, we'll pray!—like you do for a flea—for he does good sometimes without knowing it.

GILES. Yes; but go on, Brother.

[Thus pulled up, JUNIPER sits, thinks, and begins again.]

JUNIPER. Do you remember, Brother Giles, how, when Father Francis was alive, I would always be doing things that seemed wrong, and that he said was right; but that others said wasn't right?

[GILES nods, smiling at certain recollections as he does so.]

JUNIPER. Now when 'twas always like that, how was one to know? What was one to do?

GILES. Trust Father Francis.

JUNIPER. I did that. But he, twenty years dead and gone to glory, whom am I to trust now?

GILES. Yourself, Brother.

THE FOOL'S ERRAND

JUNIPER. The Lord forgive me!—that's what I'm going to do. Now I'll tell you. . . .

[He comes again to a full stop, and starts fresh.]

JUNIPER. When you go to see our Holy Father the Pope, sitting on his throne, d'you lie on your flat, and kiss his toe; or d'you only——?

GILES. I have never seen the Holy Father on his throne, Brother.

JUNIPER. But if you did, should you take off your shoes and go barefoot? Should you spit on yourself first, and say 'What a worm am I!' or should you leave him to do it?

GILES *[doing his best to keep grave]*. I should leave him to do it, Brother.

JUNIPER. Sure, that'd be a great honour!

GILES. Yes, Brother. But has what you were to tell me anything to do with the Pope?

JUNIPER. Yes; it's got everything to do with him.

GILES. Then go on.

JUNIPER. Where was I?

GILES. Not at the beginning yet, so far as I can see.

JUNIPER. Indeed, then, I am! Didn't I tell you the Devil tempted me?

GILES. You did, Brother. How did he tempt you?

[JUNIPER becomes solemn; his voice sinks to awe.]

JUNIPER. By fear! . . . Fear!

GILES *[properly impressed]*. Fear?

[JUNIPER gives an endorsing grunt; then, after a further pause, gathers resolution and begins.]

JUNIPER. I was sitting here, Brother: just where

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

I am now ; when I saw some one coming. He was too far off for me to tell what kind or like he was—except that he wasn't a woman. But the way he walked reminded me just of the only man I used to fear. . . .

GILES [*after waiting*]. Who was that, Brother ?

JUNIPER [*after more waiting*]. Father Elias.

[*At that name the compassionate heart of BROTHER GILES heaves a sigh.*]

GILES. You did well to fear him, Brother ; for he has sinned grievously against the Faith ; he is out of the Order ; Rome has excommunicated him.

JUNIPER. I know it, Brother.

GILES. As our Father Francis—taught by vision—foretold.

JUNIPER. Yes, Brother.

GILES. So now, when he dies, he will be damned.

JUNIPER. No, Brother.

GILES. No ? But what can save him, Brother ?

JUNIPER. Do you not remember how the little Father prayed, and got fresh mercy for him ; and told him that, though he must die out of the Order, he need not, for all that, be damned ?

GILES. If he repented.

JUNIPER. He has repented.

GILES. How do you know ? . . . How can you be sure ?

JUNIPER. Because—that was him, Brother.

GILES. Who ?

JUNIPER. The man whose walk reminded me. . . . The man that—as I saw coming—I felt afraid.

GILES. He : Father Elias—came here !

JUNIPER. Here, where I am now.

THE FOOL'S ERRAND

GILES. Why did he come ?

JUNIPER [*the wonder of it not yet gone for him*]. To see me, Brother. . . . I am ! . . . I am ! . . . I am ! . . . 'Twas then the Devil tempted me : for when I saw him coming, and *knew*, I was afraid, and tried to run and hide myself. . . . I did that. And he just came to the door, and waited—waited : didn't knock, didn't come in. There was he ; and there was I. [*He indicates the corner beyond the window.*] Oh, what wickedness possessed me to be afraid of him—now !

GILES. Why did he come to see you, Brother ?

JUNIPER. To ask me to pray for him. . . . Now ! [*in challenging tone*] are you going to laugh, or are you going to cry ? [*Suddenly his voice grows tender.*] Look, Brother ; Father Elias has had his head there on my knee !—Father Elias ! . . . [*His voice rises with passion.*] And I tell God that if Father Elias could put his head on Brother Juniper's knee, he's a different man—to the man he was ! And I'm going to tell Father Pope the same. . . . I am ! . . . I am ! . . . I am ! . . .

[BROTHER GILES *lays down his work, and reaches out a hand to* BROTHER JUNIPER.

GILES. Brother Juniper. . . .

[*Tears rush to his eyes ; he can say no more.*

JUNIPER. Ah ! I thought you wouldn't laugh when I told you ; and I don't blame you. What I want to know is : if he's such a different man—what am I ?

GILES [*tenderly*]. You are the same, Brother—as always.

JUNIPER. The fool ?

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

GILES. The fool. . . . That is why he came, Brother. . . . Do you remember, Juniper, how once the little Father bade you to stay : because, he said, Father Elias needed you ?

JUNIPER. I do, Brother !

[*He sits rapt in wonder.*

GILES. Because ' where wisdom and prudence are the rule,' he said, ' fools are precious.'

JUNIPER. Sure ; yes, I remember !

GILES. So now it has come true. The little Father was wise, Juniper.

JUNIPER. The Lord help me to be good for him ! . . . I 'm going to try.

GILES [*with diffidence*]. Tell me, Brother, what he said to you ; if you may tell me.

JUNIPER. He said nothing, Brother, but just to tell me what he was : lonely, and weary ; and without a hope ; full of hate of what he had done ; full of sorrow for his sins ; all his pride gone. . . . He was humble, Brother. Almost it made me afraid of him again, to see him so humble—afraid if I touched I 'd hurt. ' Brother Juniper, pray for me ! ' was all he said. But how he said it ; oh, how he said it !

GILES. And you ?

JUNIPER. Little enough could I do—being but a fool. Sure, I kissed him, Brother : he let me ! But he didn't kiss—*me*. [*Again the wonder takes him ; he pauses, and then goes on.*] Then he got up—and went.

GILES. Where to, Brother ?

JUNIPER. To the Leper-house.

GILES [*shuddering*]. Alas ! has he also become a leper ?

JUNIPER. No. He 's gone there, because there, he

THE FOOL'S ERRAND

said, they 'll let an outcast do service. I offered he should come here ; but he wouldn't !—because he 's under excommunication. . . . ' Brother Juniper, pray for me ! ' he says. . . . I 've been doing it ever since. And now I 've something else to do. That 's why I was mending those shoes.

GILES. His, Brother ?

JUNIPER. No ; mine. I 've a long journey before me.

GILES. Where are you going ?

JUNIPER. To Rome, Brother. . . . Is it laugh now, or cry ? . . . I 'm going to see the Holy Father. . . . I 'm going to tell him what I know. . . . I 'm going to ask him—for what Father Francis promised, to come true. . . . And I 'm not afraid of the Pope, now, Brother. . . . I 'm afraid of nobody. . . . Why ? Because I 've had Brother Elias come to me—here, to *me* ; and say—but I can't say it as he said it : ' Brother Juniper, pray for me ! ' And ' Brother Juniper, ' he says, ' ask our blessed Father Francis to pray for me. ' . . . I ! . . . I ! . . . Can you believe ?

GILES. I can well, Brother.

JUNIPER. Aye ; you 've the brain for it. I haven't. . . . But I 'm praying hard ; for I 'd like Father Francis to know.

GILES. Doubtless he does know, Brother.

JUNIPER. And I 'd like—Sister Clare to know.

GILES. She shall know, Brother.

JUNIPER. And there 's one other. [*There is a long pause. GILES waits patiently.*] I 'd like—Brother Leo to know.

GILES. Alas ! where he is we know not.

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

JUNIPER. But God knows. . . . When Father Elias turned him out of the Order—it wasn't right, Brother—was it ?

GILES. No.

JUNIPER. . . . So there's Brother Elias ; and there's Brother Leo ; and here am I. . . . And I going to tell the Pope—for both of 'em !

GILES. May I come with you, Brother ?

JUNIPER. No, Brother. I'm going to do this alone. I'm not afraid. . . . [*He rises.*] There ! Talking's over. Give back : I must get on with those shoes. I've got to wear 'em.

[*GILES rises, kisses the shoes as he returns them, and goes to draw water.*]

JUNIPER. Oh ! there's another at it again ! All fools every one of us ! . . . I am ! . . . I am ! . . . I am !

GILES [*singing as he draws the water*].

Praised be my Lord for all fools,

And namely praise for our Brother Ass :

The ways of the wise He overrules ;

And mighty things He bringeth to pass.

JUNIPER [*busy at his mendings again*]. I am !

[*His pitcher filled, GILES turns to look at JUNIPER, then goes slowly up the stairs.*]

GILES. Praised be my Lord for all who give

Pardon to others for His love's sake ;

And meekly endure in pains to live :

In Him they rest, and in Him shall wake.

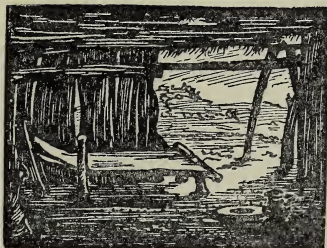
[*His voice dies away as he turns the stair.*]

JUNIPER *continues his mendings.*

CURTAIN

THE LAST DISCIPLE

(1270)



St. Francis has been dead many years ; and BROTHER LEO, the loved disciple, now old and feeble, is near his end. Persecuted by the Superiors of the Order for a too-faithful following of his master's teaching, he has become something of an outlaw ; and any of the Brothers who come to see him do so by stealth. He lies on a sack bed in a half-ruined hut,

whose walls, roof, and doorless entrance let in the day. It is late afternoon ; the fields outside wear the fresh green of spring, and the hillside beyond glows bright under a sky darkening for rain.

In the gloom of the hut, the stretched and motionless body lies almost unnoticeable ; till, feebly and with pauses, his voice makes itself heard.

LEO. Little Father. . . Little Father. . . .

[Through a rift of cloud a ray of level sunlight strikes in, making the interior bright for a few moments before it passes. By intonation alone, with no raising of the voice, the Old Man begins singing.]

Praised be my Lord for all being ;
And namely praise for our brother Sun,
Who bringeth us day, and light for seeing :
With joy he cometh his course to run.

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

[After a pause, in the once more darkened interior, he begins speaking—words of St. Francis, which he remembers.]

Therefore, let no man say, 'I love God,' if he do not the will of God; or if he give not his body unto pain of death, that so God's will be done in him—if, by infirmity, of himself he cannot. So in his weakness shall the power of Love be made known; so shall the Kingdom of Heaven be also in men's hearts (which see darkly) as where, in light celestial, seraphs do behold Him face to face.

[While he speaks there is a sound of approaching sheep-bells; a young SHEPHERD, carrying a pitcher and a spray of hawthorn, halts outside the door, and stands, half fearful, listening. Only when the words pass into silence does he find courage to enter.]

SHEPHERD. I've come again, Brother. Here's water and bread; and here's that other thing you asked for. There's plenty of it about now: hill-sides white with it.

[He sets down the pitcher and loaf, and lays the blossoming branch on LEO'S bed. Very feebly LEO'S hand goes out to touch it. The SHEPHERD stands watching.]

[After waiting awhile for the other to speak.] Is that all you want, Brother?

LEO. I thank you, Brother. That is all.

SHEPHERD. And you don't mind being out here all alone, when it gets dark? I should be afraid.

LEO *[after a long pause]*. I am not alone, Brother.

[The SHEPHERD looks round him, a little scared. He shifts to the door, anxious to get away.]

THE LAST DISCIPLE

SHEPHERD. I'll look in again, when I've got the sheep in—if it hasn't gone dark. To-morrow I'll come early.

LEO. Do, Brother. God give you peace; and your sheep also.

SHEPHERD. I've not to complain. This season we've done well. . . . It looks a bit like storm.

[He goes; at intervals his voice is heard in the field, calling the sheep.]

LEO *[holding up the spray, sings]*.

Praised be my Lord for Mother Earth;

Us she holdeth in care and keep;

And divers herbs she bringeth to birth,

Flowers to array, and grass to reap.

*[Outside there is a faint roll of thunder;
it begins to rain.]*

Praised be my Lord for Sister Water,

Ever of service hath she been:

Waiting on men, sweet running water;

She is humble, and precious, and clean.

*[Feebly he raises himself, dips, drinks;
then lies watching the rain.]*

Ah! There, there it still comes; and there's joy in it! . . . Run, sister, run! I shall never see you again.

[The sun shines out; the rain continues.]

Now there's a rainbow somewhere—but I can't see it. . . . And yet, I do.

[Too weak to support himself any longer, he falls back, and lying in shadow sees the sunlight striking the wall above his head. And again he speaks words that he remembers spoken by St. Francis in his last hour.]

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

O Brother Sun,
Rejoicing thou dost run
Unto all lands !
Therefore I bid thee take
This heart in thy hands,
Of a poor little one
Whose journeyings are all done !

[*Suddenly his voice becomes urgent, and pitiful.*
Father Francis ! . . . Little Father, little Father,
pray for me ! . . . [After a pause he continues.

And when thou dost make
To rise from thy wings
A new East, and dost wake
(For our dear Lord's sake),
Where new day begins,
Beast, reptile, and bird,
Cattle, and herd,
And all creeping things :
Then cry for me,
Unto all thou dost see,
' On a Tree of great mercy,
Christ died for thee !' . . .

Little Father . . . little Father ! . . . O love of
St. Francis, pray for me !

[*Outside the hut appears SISTER GIACOMINA in
cloak and hood. She stands for a moment to
listen, then enters. BROTHER LEO starts, as
though a vision had come in answer to his
prayer. She throws back her hood, and is
recognised. Older than BROTHER LEO, she
has still the life and vigour which he lacks, and
the expression of her withered face is radiant
and serene.*

THE LAST DISCIPLE

GIACOMINA. What, Brother, still all alone ?

LEO. No, Sister.

[*His hand feebly raises the spray.*]

GIACOMINA. Well, well, well ! Whose good thought was that ?

LEO. The shepherd, who folds in that field, brought it. Every day he comes once, sometimes twice, and brings water and bread. And often in the field I hear him, or his sheep. . . . Then you come. . . . No, Sister, I am never alone.

GIACOMINA. Could I come more often, I would, little Brother.

LEO. Do not wish it, little Sister. Let all be—as it is.

GIACOMINA. Must I not wish but as *you* wish ? Come, Brother, let me wish as I like. Here, under my hand, I have brought a new wish with me to-day ; one waiting without, that has long wished, and now begs that he may speak with you.

LEO. With me ? Why, Sister ?

GIACOMINA. Three days since, he heard the call, and has become a tertiary. Are you well enough ? Will you see him ?

LEO. I will see any that wishes to see me.

[GIACOMINA goes to the door ; and at her call a young NOVICE enters.]

GIACOMINA. Come in !

LEO. God give you peace, Brother !

[*The NOVICE approaches ; he kneels, and, kissing LEO'S hand, remains silent.*]

LEO. You wish to see me. What is your need ?

NOVICE. O Lover of St. Francis, speak to me !

GIACOMINA [*preparing to leave them*]. Shall I go ?

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

NOVICE. No, Sister ; for you also have seen and known. My heart is hungry, Brother. Of our Father, the blessed Francis, tell me all you know !

LEO. All that I know ? My time now is too short—for that, Brother.

NOVICE. A little—something to make me understand ! You—oh, you that knew him !

LEO. What shall we tell, Sister ?

GIACOMINA. Tell him we both are old ; and yet his heart in us stays young. . . . Was he not beautiful ?

LEO. God, to blind eyes and sinners, gave grace to think so !

GIACOMINA. He was a conqueror !

LEO. Of hearts : servant to all.

GIACOMINA. Was rich !

LEO. Possessing nothing.

GIACOMINA. Was wise.

LEO. Yet had no learning.

GIACOMINA. His love was wonderful !

LEO. Passing the love of women.

GIACOMINA. He did God's will—looking for no reward.

LEO. His love was a light, that came we saw not whence ; and from us passed—whither we knew, but saw not.

GIACOMINA. He had joy in all his afflictions.

LEO. Was patient to men's reproaches.

GIACOMINA. Won enemies by kindness.

LEO. Bore all men's burdens.

GIACOMINA. Shared each man's sorrow.

LEO. Rejoiced in all rejoicing.

GIACOMINA. Was glad to live.

LEO. Yet was more glad to die.

THE LAST DISCIPLE

GIACOMINA. Recovered the lost.

LEO. Comforted the forsaken.

GIACOMINA. Healed lepers.

LEO. Loved sinners.

*[For a moment the two lovers cease speaking ;
their love has gone beyond words.]*

NOVICE. And you both knew him !

GIACOMINA. He was my dearest friend.

LEO. He was my brother, and father.

NOVICE. Oh, tell me more ! for everything, as you speak, sounds wonderful. . . . And he, too, once a sinner !

LEO. Aye : by God's mercy, he knew sin well ; so knew how to help sinners !

[LEO lies rapt in thought for which he has no word. GIACOMINA takes up the tale.]

GIACOMINA. He was of the Kingdom of Heaven, and like a little child. All who followed, who listened to him, became also like children. All loved him.

NOVICE. Oh ! tell me more !

LEO. His was the joyful heart, Brother.

GIACOMINA. Often he sang. When he laughed, all who heard laughed with him.

LEO. He taught us the wisdom of foolishness. Many can understand the wise and prudent, Brother, when what they say is clear. But he understood fools : he was patient and loved them. 'A good fool,' he said, 'is a great work of mercy, and well-pleasing to God.'

GIACOMINA. 'Become a brother,' he said : 'then you will understand.'

LEO. He knew mysteries that none dared ask to share—saw what no other could see. One saw him

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

lifted to Heaven : but when he came back to earth he was simple. One day a man came to lie to him—to deceive him ; but remained to speak the truth. He confessed himself. The little Father said, ‘ It is *my* fault, Brother, that you should ever have thought of deceiving me.’ He asked forgiveness of the sinner who confessed. . . . To all sinners, however great, he said ‘ Pray for me ! ’

[LEO becomes speechless. GIACOMINA comes to the rescue, and takes up the tale.

GIACOMINA. He was but a youth when first I saw him, partner in his father’s trade. When next I came, I found him and two friends building together : Francis, Leo, Bernard. All the world now sees that building, which goes building still.

LEO. He laid the foundation of it : poverty, love, charity, obedience. That is all he did, Brother—that it might last. If others do otherwise, the work will fail.

NOVICE. Did he say, Brother, that we must possess—*nothing* ?

LEO. He did not say it only : it was his life. ‘ Possess not, and be free ; have nothing : give all.’ From that came joy, peace, power. The world is weak, through having great possessions. Thence come fear, war, anger, strife, cruelty, jealousy, hatred, destruction, death. . . . Death !

NOVICE. How did he live, Brother—possessing nothing ?

LEO. Even as you see a star, stationed alone in Heaven. It has no feet, no hands to aid it : only the power of God motions, uplifts, and keeps it placed. So he . . .

THE LAST DISCIPLE

[GIACOMINA *gives him water.*

And as a star,

Found by the rising day, faints to the eye,—
Becomes invisible, yet lives on still—
There, though one sees it not, a flame of fire,
Angelic, in unseen ministry : so he.

GIACOMINA.

We cannot show him, Brother. With our best will,
So little can be told.

LEO.

All that he did,

Or said, or suffered ; sorrowed or found joy in,
It means no more than—as when the world was made,
God gave it form, and voice, and sound, and
motion,

To do His will : and yet the world meant nothing—
Till, in it, Christ was born. So, Christ in him,
Brother,

Was born. Of that he died, and is gone hence,
Raised to the light invisible, that mine eyes
Cannot contain !

[*His voice breaks with weakness.*

GIACOMINA. Rest, Brother, rest awhile !

LEO.

In the dark places of my soul, he was a star !
The star went from me : there he still remains
Where the Light received him !

NOVICE.

O Brother Leo, O Father, you who knew,
Loved, watched by, tended, touched him whom I seek
With such poor understanding, lay your hand
Upon my head and heart : before you go,
Give me your blessing !

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

LEO [*laying hands*].

His, Brother, his! Own nothing! That is riches.
Listen, nay, listen, Brother: here is something
That I have held—too long! Come, take it from
me!

[*He opens his vest and draws out a small folded
packet suspended by a cord.*]

NOVICE [*taking it*].

What is it, Brother, Father?

GIACOMINA [*her voice breaking*].

Oh, what a giving is this!

Now shines thy star.

LEO.

Here, from my heart, This from his heart which
came,

Take, take! O little Father! Possession goes:
And only love is left!

[*Kissing the packet, he looses, and lays it in the
YOUNG MAN'S hand.*]

[*His voice sinks to a whisper.*]

In a dark hour

With this he wrought salvation, when in despair
And desolation of spirit I lay bound,
Outcast, a soul forsaken: because one man
I loved more than my Maker. So mortal a love
Burned in my breast; there it became a torch
In the hand of the Evil One. Hell opened her
mouth.

God shut His face from me. Through cover of
night,

Searching he found me—with his own hand wrote
this,

And gave it to me. Read!

THE LAST DISCIPLE

NOVICE [*reading*]. ‘The Lord bless and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine on thee. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. . . . Brother Leo, the Lord bless thee, as thou hast blessed me.’

LEO.

So having written, he read : then said to me,
‘When thou art in trouble, show this to Brother Sin.’

NOVICE. Brother Sin !

LEO.

‘Do not be afraid,’ he said, ‘of Brother Sin. He is a leper : but when thou hast washed his feet,
Then shalt thou see, in them, the wounds of Christ. Yea, when for us Christ died—with Him Died also Brother Sin.’

[*The NOVICE presses the writing to his lips ; then folds, and lays it away in his bosom.*

Thus did he help me. Take it, little Brother ;
’Tis all I have. When thou’rt in trouble, show this

To Brother Sin. . . . Go, and God give you peace !

[*Without a word, the NOVICE kneels, takes his blessing, kisses his hand, and goes.*

GIACOMINA. He is gone, Brother.

LEO.

Has come : is one of us ! Our sure possession,
The Light which leads, he follows—and will find,
Though many miss the way, where my feet fail.
The Order has cast me out ; yet there remains
The Brotherhood, whose head and corner-stone,
Walls, roof, and door, are all set up in Christ. . . .

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

And these poor hands had once part in that building,
Whose top has reached to Heaven ! Now, as men
build,

Confusion drowns their tongues. But we—that heard
Pentecost come again, where each man's language,
Into each heart, by one man's lips was uttered—
We know the speech of Paradise is one,
And cannot be divided. . . .

[In the distance a bell begins tolling.

. . . See ! it grows dark.

You stay too late, Sister ; you must go home.

GIACOMINA.

In a while, Brother : when we have said all
We have to say. Hark ! There is a sweet sound :
There is a company, that, unconfounded,
Sounds forth into the world !

LEO. Aye ? . . . What is it ?

GIACOMINA.

Yonder a bell which tolls the hour ; and here,
In the fold, sheep making music as they feed—
So many we cannot count them ; but the shepherd—
He counts not, for he knows.

LEO. What is that water I hear ?

GIACOMINA.

It comes from the hills :
The little torrents falling after the rain.
To-morrow, ere noon, they will be dry again,
But earth will have drunk, and will be satisfied.

LEO. I too, then, shall have drunk—and shall be
satisfied !

GIACOMINA.

If it must be so, Brother, is there nothing
That I can do—before : while yet there is time ?

THE LAST DISCIPLE

LEO.

Time is from God, Sister ; but goes not to Him
With us, when *we* go. . . . Farewell, Brother
Time !

[There is silence between them for a while.

GIACOMINA. Shall I bring a priest, Brother ?

LEO.

Aye, if you will ; and if he is willing, Sister.
Tell him 'tis Brother Leo. If he will not—
Commend me unto others that know me better.

GIACOMINA.

For that, I needs must leave you. You must be
alone for a while.

LEO. Not alone, Sister.

GIACOMINA. God's peace be with you ! I shall be
back soon. *[She goes out quickly.*

LEO.

Soon . . . soon. . . . What is 'soon' ? Soon all
will be dark,

Darker than night. O Star that I cannot see !

*[And now, in the gradually increasing darkness,
the quiet recumbent figure becomes almost indis-
tinguishable. Only a glimmer of light falls
upon the face, and the voice, with pauses now
and again for weakness, or meditation, goes
slowly on.*

Domine, Domine, Deus salutis meae, in die
clamavi, et nocte coram te. Redime me, Domine,
et miserere mei.

*[Then again, with voice scarcely above a whisper,
he sings.*

Praised be my Lord for all who give,
Pardon to others for His Love's sake,

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

And meekly endure in pains to live :

In Him they rest ; in Him shall wake.

[*He speaks.*

Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam ! Exaudi me : intende voci meae, cum clamavero ad te !

[*He sings.*

Praised be my Lord for Sister Death. . . .

No mortal body shall she spare.

Woe, if in sin man perisheth !

For him the pains of Hell lie there.

[*He speaks.*

Pains of Hell ! . . . Death . . . I am afraid . . . Little Father ! . . . Little Father ! . . . I cannot find thee : hold me ! let me know ! . . . Take ! Take ! . . . Enough, no more. Live, Lucio, live ! . . . I *have* lived, Brother . . . Kiss me, Francesco . . . I thank thee for my life ! . . . Thy pardon, Brother : who art thou ? . . . Not my feet only, but my hands and head . . . My feet first, Brother . . . Eripe me, Domine, ab homine malo ; a viro iniquo, eripe me ! Intret oratio mea in conspectu tuo, Domine ; ostende mihi, Domine, misericordiam tuam.

[*Then there is silence. Dark against the gloom of the outside twilight, the SHEPHERD comes, stands in the doorway and listens.*

SHEPHERD. Brother . . . Brother . . . Is any one there ? . . . Is any one there—alive ? . . . Oh !

[*Scared by the silence, he turns and runs.*

LEO [*starting up*]. Little Father ! Little Father ! . . . Did I not hear thee call ? . . . Oh, star ! . . .

[*But the star he sees now is not the one that he desires : he lies down again.*

THE LAST DISCIPLE

O little Father, whom I so loved, body and soul—now take me, body and soul, Shepherd of sheep! and lead me where I know not! . . . Lead me from thought, from wish, from love of thee; away from fellow-man to Maker Christ. . . . In Him let me find light! . . . Dark, all is dark. . . . De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine, Domine, exaudi vocem meam. Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine, Domine, quis sustinebit! . . . Bread, bread, Brother! . . . Man is His making! . . . O Jesu Christ, make me! . . . O Lord, Lover Christ, when saw we thee hungry, sick, poor, in prison? . . . Go not far from me, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice! . . . Take! . . . Take! . . . Take! . . . The Lord make His face to shine upon thee. Brother Leo, the Lord bless thee as thou hast blest me! . . . Show this to Brother Sin. . . . O Maker Christ! . . . crucified, . . . dead . . . buried . . . descended . . . rose again . . . communion of saints . . . forgiveness of sins. . . . Through my fault, my own fault, my own most grievous fault. . . . Forgive me, Brother Sin. . . . No light . . . no light . . . no light. . . . And yet I see!

[His voice ceases. It is so dark one does not see him die. Outside are footsteps; the light of a lantern is seen approaching. GIACOMINA enters, followed by a Priest, and a Friar bearing the light.]

GIACOMINA. This way, Father. Brother, bring in the light! . . . There he lies, Father. . . . We are come, Brother.

[She approaches the bed, and kneels beside it.]

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

Brother Leo! . . . Brother Leo!

[The light of the lantern falls on the dead face.]

PRIEST *[making the sign of the Cross]*. Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine; et lux perpetua luceat ei. *[Over the dead body he raises the Host.]* Corpus Domini nostri, Jesu Christi, custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam.

CURTAIN

NOTE TO 'THE LAST DISCIPLE'

THE following passages have reference to earlier plays, in which Brother Leo, previous to his religious calling, has appeared under the name of Lucio Leone. All the plays here quoted form part of the *Little Plays of St. Francis*.

- Page 43. '*Praised be my Lord,*' etc. These are verses from the '*Canticle of the Sun*' written by St. Francis.
- Page 44. '*Therefore let no man say,*' etc. Words dictated to Leo by St. Francis shortly before he died. (See '*Brother Sin.*')
- Page 46. '*O Brother Sun,*' etc. Words sung by St. Francis upon his death-bed. (See '*Sister Death.*')
- Page 50. '*He was but a youth,*' etc. The first task undertaken by St. Francis in his life of ministry was the restoration of ruined churches. (See '*The Builders.*')
- Page 52. '*In a dark hour,*' etc. A short while before his death St. Francis, finding Brother Leo in spiritual despair, gave him for his comfort the autograph here quoted, which still exists. (See '*Brother Sin.*')
- Page 56. '*Pains of Hell,*' etc. From this point up to the end the mind of Brother Leo is filled with broken memories of the past, of words and incidents recorded in the previous plays.
- Page 56. '*Live, Lucio, live!*' are the dying words of the woman he loved, killed on the bridal night by a jealous rival, who also uses the words mockingly. (See '*The Bride-Feast.*')
- Page 56. '*Kiss me, Francesco!*' His own words to Francis at the moment of their parting in the prison at

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

Perugia, from which Francis, remaining a prisoner himself, had ransomed him. (See 'Fellow-Prisoners.')

Page 56. '*I thank thee for my life*' and '*My feet first, Brother,*' recall answers that were made by Leo to the repentant Rudolfo, his rival, discovered in the foot-washing at the Lazaretto, when, to do his enemy a service, Leo took the place of Francis. (See 'The Lepers.')

Page 56. '*Take! Take!*' etc. Memories of the last communion and dying words of St. Francis to his disciples. (See 'Sister Death.')

The whole scene of the death of Brother Leo is intended to give final expression to a character previously indicated,—one who is naturally despondent and self-distrustful, but passionately faithful in his attachment to St. Francis. His last words, in their difference, are at once a contrast to, and a reflection of, the last words of St. Francis: 'Welcome, Sister Death!' 'Welcome, Brother Sun!'

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

LITTLE PLAYS OF ST. FRANCIS:
A Dramatic Cycle from the Life and
Legend of St. Francis of Assisi: by
LAURENCE HOUSMAN. With a Preface
by H. GRANVILLE-BARKER. 10s. 6d. net.

[*Second Impression.*]

‘In width and depth of humanity this book excels any work by Mr. Housman that we know. . . . Strong drama there is, too. . . . And spectacle is not wanting.

‘But it is the cycle as a whole which charms and moves: the cycle, drawing one gradually nearer and nearer to the last mysteries, where all the associations of awe, of reverence, of affection, even of language are drawn in by the poet to make an exalted beauty. The mingled sadness and glory of the last of the three parts are deeply affecting. The dramatic form reveals anew its essential dignity and kinship with religious ritual. The human story is simply, nobly, drolly told in prose, in blank verse, in lyrical poem. The degree of one’s desire to see the cycle acted depends upon the degree of one’s faith in the power of people to act; but to read these plays of the Poverello is to be enriched.’—*Times*.


‘If there were enough dramatists at present writing with Mr. Housman’s sincerity and single-mindedness, it is very likely that the theatre would reform itself. There is beauty in these plays; much of it inherent in the

subject, as the author will be the first to grant, but much also that has been brought in by its passionate expression in dramatic shape.'—*New Statesman*.

'This book contains, next to the original stories of St. Francis, the very best food for the study of the Poverello by any one who wants to know what kind of person this "most Christlike of Christians" really was.'—*Guardian*.

'While we have no hope of ever seeing the whole series played, there are a dozen little plays here the acting of which would repay a hundredfold those who took part in them, and give any audience a new uplifting pleasure.'—*Glasgow Herald*.

'Mr. Housman, master alike of sturdy prose, rhythmical blank verse, and gentle lyric, has prepared for the enthusiast the happiest material. There is enough of drama in the legends of St. Francis and more than enough of beauty to give the cycle both narrative and poetic quality.'—*Daily Herald*.



Followers
of
Saint
Francis
by
Laurence
Housman

